1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

Deformations, &c.

304 Every child has the ear lobes and the nasal septum pierced; the methods employed are described on p. 98. Raised scars, *pupubo*, are commonly seen on the chests and shoulders of women, where they are self-inflicted, usually in the extremity of grief. Other scars, particularly those on the forehead, are the result of the practice of blood-letting to relieve pain. In some few instances we see keloids on the arms and across the sternum which, hideous as they seem to European eyes, are said to be made with the sole idea of personal enhancement.

There is no deformation of the genitalia. Informants have invariably been both astounded and amused at the notion of circumcision. And yet we have two early notes—both of them from competent observers—which state definitely that the practice existed. Mr. H. O. Forbes made a voyage up the north-east coast in 1885 and got into touch with the natives of Holincote [Holnicote?] Bay, who waded a long way out to his boat. He remarked on the poorness of their houses, the mean description of their ornaments, and the fact that they 'were all circumcised'.[1] Eight years later Sir Wm. MacGregor wrote of the natives about Gona (presumably the same district) that 'some are circumcised, others not'.[2] This was Sir William's first visit to the locality, and I cannot but believe that he was guilty of an unaccustomed malobservation. Nowadays, so far from practising circumcision, the native regards the exposure of the *glans penis* as shameful and ridiculous, and even employs the expression *bi panjari* (bald) as a term of abuse. Probably what the two observers saw was not due to a surgical cause but to nature, or else we must assume a very remarkable change in custom of which I have discovered no hint or recollection.

Tattoo (*Taroro*) is uncommon and, where it is found, wholly inferior. It is seen usually on girls, but is not a general habit of the people.[3] Tattoo is entirely voluntary

[1] Memo. in *Report on British New Guinea*, 1886, p. 43.

[2] *Annual Report*, 1893–4, p. 4.

[3] Nevertheless the habit is evidently of old standing. MacGregor on first visiting Oro Bay wrote: 'A few had some tattoo-marks on the face, but this was neither well done nor deeply marked.' *Annual Report*, 1890–91, p. 16.

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

and discontinue his treatment; and, indeed, if he be astute enough, he may decide to have no truck with any case that seems too far gone. For it is generally held that sorcery sickness cannot be cured by the ordinary methods of the healer. Failing other explanations, therefore, he adopts this most pessimistic one. Sorcery is, in fact, the native's exegetical last card.

It is not my intention to deal with the methods of the sorcerer further than to say that (*a*) they follow the characteristic procedure in which some symbol of the victim is subjected to a treatment representing in symbolic form the sickness which it is hoped may afflict him; and that (*b*) this process is thought to be made infallible, i.e. the hoped-for result of it inevitable, by the addition of some element of a supernatural character which is known only to the sorcerer. Examples of their methods have been supplied in the essay on Orokaiva Magic, to which the reader is referred. At any rate they need not enter into the subject of the present chapter; for what concerns us here is not the actual practice of black magic, but that entirely disproportionate belief in its practice which has so often supplied a diagnosis of disease.

Common-sense Treatments

We may now turn our attention to native methods of treating disease. These may be considered under three heads: (i) Common-sense, (ii) Expulsive, and (iii) Placatory (which, by the way, are not meant to correspond with the three heads under which were classified the causes of disease).

To the first division there belong a number of treatments which, whatever their degree of futility, seem nevertheless to be straightforward and 'common-sense'. Wounds, for instance, are washed and subjected to a treatment of hot air, blown through a tube of heated bark or banana stalk. After that they may be given a hot compress of leaves. For snake-bite the treatment, I am told, is to cut about the bite and let the blood flow. For headache there is the old remedy of blood-letting from the forehead (by means of a series of small cuts).

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

small cuts). For the open sores (*kini*) or ulcers, which so 752
commonly afflict the natives, there are a number of remedies in the form of applications. One consists of the scrapings of the bark of the Goru palm mixed with dry coco-nut; another of the green fruit of the tree *Puga* (which contains a poison) mixed with ashes; another of a paste of lime and the scrapings of a bark called *Popo*. These are only examples. The different treatments are innumerable, and it does not appear that they are widely known, for inquiry will always discover new methods in new places. Nor can it be said that they are very efficacious, or even that they are often employed. I have seen a man wearing a very neat bandage of leaf on his heel tied about his foot: it covered an application of *gamboja*, a kind of phosphorescent fungus, which he said generated heat. But sores are commonest on children, and as it appears that some of the remedies are painful the children refuse to endure them and soon tear off the bandages. In most cases, therefore, the sores are left to look after themselves.

For the skin disease, *tinea imbricata*, commonly known in 757
Papua as *simpoma*, the natives have a number of remedies which, as far as I know, are all ineffective. I can cite a kind of astringent fig juice, scraped yam, and wallaby blood. The last may seem to us magic pure and simple, though it is, no doubt, as much common-sense to the native as our own idea that mutton fat is good for the complexion is common-sense to us.

In ordinary indisposition a man lies down as close as he 758
can to the fire and is nursed by his wife, who will support his head in her lap. He often removes his *bo*, and goes completely naked, though I do not know of any reason except that it makes him feel more comfortable. A sick man often moves with his wife to a garden house or some other secluded place in order to secure peace and quiet. That is the ostensible reason for what is quite a voluntary isolation; though I have known a sick man to vacate his house because he suspected the presence of a *sovai*, so that maybe when the patient retires into isolation it is more than the mere noise and bustle of the village that he means to leave behind him.

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

Sometimes the position is reversed, and unaffected men and women will leave the village for the bush in order to escape an epidemic (*tawni*) which has seized on its inhabitants. In this case there is no doubt as to their motive: they leave the village to escape the *sovai* who have caused the *tawni*.

The few examples I have given, however, will show that the native possesses a certain number of methods in the treatment of sickness which, however wide of the mark they appear to us, are yet in a manner reasonable. They are common knowledge and, to the native at least, common-sense. They are his household remedies.

Expulsive Treatments

From these we may turn to the characteristic kind of treatment which I have called expulsive. There are many varieties of expulsive methods, and they are all based on the very prevalent idea of disease as an intrusive element in the body; furthermore, they call for special powers in those who practise them, so that whereas common-sense treatments are known to any one and every one, expulsive treatments are usually carried out by 'doctors'. This word will stand for those individuals who make a special practice of curing and who are thought to possess powers and medicines (*sivo*) which make their methods effective. The word *sivo* also requires explanation. It stands for good 'medicine', i.e. for any substance (usually a leaf) which possesses a mysterious potency for good; and it applies equally to, e.g., a medicine planted with the taro to make it grow, a medicine given to a sick man to make him well, and a medicine used by a magician to make his methods, the mere routine of magic, have their desired effect.

It is with one general class of *sivo* that I may introduce the subject of expulsive treatments, though it is to be noted that this class (contrary to the general rule of expulsive treatments) consists mostly of home remedies which are not administered by a doctor. In many cases it is impossible to get at the *modus operandi* of the *sivo*, because its use may be traditional and the user may be as ignorant of the way it acts as the ordinary layman is ignorant of the action of *sivo*

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

757
516

(*a*) The *Jura* Treatment

(*b*) The *Jura* Treatment [facing p. 296]

PLATE XXXVI

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

vomica. But in not a few cases it appears that the potency of the medicine consists in its smell. Thus we find a man suffering from a severe cold who is taking as medicine a bark called *Siganapa*. This, which is strongly scented, is boiled and the decoction added to a stew which the patient eats. According to the explanation, the sickness inside the man's stomach will smell the *Siganapa* and go away; so that in such a case we may regard the *sivo* as typically expulsive. Such a remedy need not be taken internally; it is enough to smell it in one's nostrils. So a man smells scented leaves for stomach-ache; and I have seen another garlanded about his shoulders and waist with strands of a creeper called *Toibo*, which gave out an abominable smell, resembling that of tree-bugs. Its virtue consisted in its smell (*mune*), by which the sickness was 'frightened away'. Another effective remedy is the fragrant lemon-grass (*Dariva*).

The same idea—that of driving out the sickness by smell—is at the bottom of a process called *jura*, which consists of fumigating the sick (*vide* also pp. 200–1). In one case which I saw the subject had been suffering with headache and general pains. His friends prepared a mixture in which seven kinds of leaf or bark were added to coco-nut milk in a *teva* or wooden dish. The patient descends from his house and squats over the *teva* dish; a hot stone has been held ready in a coco-nut husk and is now dropped into the mixture; a pandanus mat is thrown over all and the patient remains underneath enveloped in steam. Principal among the seven ingredients was *Toibo*, the extremely evil-smelling creeper mentioned above, and all the remaining six had a more or less decided odour.[1]

The commonest and simplest of expulsive treatments is one of a very different kind, known as *bumbari*, 'taking away'. One or more doctors operate on the patient, who lies on his

[1] In another case of this fumigating process, the technique was the same, but the principle apparently quite different. If a man's sickness were diagnosed as the result of eating a 'bad' snake, some snake bones would be put into the *teva* with water and the hot stone added. The patient would sit in the rising steam, and, if the diagnosis were correct, the treatment would be effective. If the sickness were due to eating a 'bad' banana, then banana skins would take the place of snake bones. I did not see this process, nor any similar in principle, carried out, so the information may not be wholly reliable. No satisfactory explanation was offered.